

## From the President

Dear Members,

As the year draws to a close, Karen and I would like to thank the SOTA membership for your dedication to the work you do every day as part of the teaching profession. You inspire, nurture, and build futures daily.

The work of educators is also not without its challenges. SOTA continues to advocate on your behalf and the SOTA Office appreciates those members who reach out with concerns, and as always encourage all SOTA members to do the same. Your voice drives the work that we do for our members.



May your winter break provide true rest and that you use the gift of time to do the things that bring joy. Remember that in 2026 we stand with you in our work to make a brighter future together.

Happy Holidays from SOTA!

In Solidarity,

Jeff Cieszecki



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## Member Initiated Project Grant

The Member Initiated Project (MIP) grant allows individual members or teams of two members, to extend their learning related to their practice and gives them the opportunity to develop and implement resources.

The Member Initiated Project grant can support a total of 12 grants (6 per funding period) with **funds up to \$800** to develop teaching strategies and support materials related to their teaching practice.

Activities eligible for a MIP grant may include:

- Creating teaching resources
- Implementation of research-based learning
- To purchase professional learning books or other materials needed to further the work of the group (to a maximum of 50% total funding)
- Release time (up to 2 sub days @ \$230/day)
- Hosting workshops open to members in the Division (hosted after school hours)

MIP activities can only take place after the approval of the application.

The next funding period for the MIP grant is now open. Applications are due **February 1, 2026**.

For information regarding the application procedure, timelines, and reporting requirements, see the SOTA website at:

<http://www.sotamb.org/sotaboard-pd-fund.html>



**Applications for In Province, including tuition, must be submitted a minimum of 10 days prior to the activity.**

## SOTA/Board PD Fund Q&A

*What should I include in the rationale?*

The PD application must have a rationale that includes:

- i) How does attending this PD inform your practice?
- ii) How does attending this PD impact your work in Seven Oaks?

*How do I apply for a PD activity?*

All applications must be submitted online through the Employee Connect online management system except for MIP Grant and Ed Leave applications.

*How much tuition is covered by the fund?*

Eligible tuition fees will be reimbursed at 1/3 of the tuition amount to a maximum of \$500.00 Canadian per 3 credit hours.

*I don't know the name of the course I am taking next semester. Can I still apply for tuition?*

Yes! Enter your tuition request and note that information is pending. You must then provide the specific details at least 10 days prior to the start of the course.

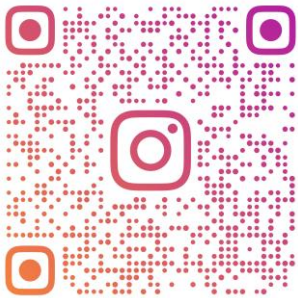
**Questions about PD? Call your SOTA VP, Karen Vaarmeyer, at 204-985-6120.**

# SOTA at Divisional Day

SOTA is on Instagram

Our SOTA Instagram has posts and stories about the latest news and events about our association.

Follow us using the QR code below:



SEVENOAKSTEACHERSASSOCIATION



## *SOTA at Divisional Day*



# SOTA at Divisional Day



## *SOTA at Divisional Day*



### SPOT the ERROR!

If you spot an error in the ACORN, email the SOTA office. You could win a gift card and your very own, Oakley, the SOTA phone holder!



# MTS Updates



## STRATEGIC PLAN 2026–2031

MTS is excited to launch the MTS 2026–2031 Strategic Plan, a renewed commitment to strengthening our organizational foundation, deepening support for members, and advancing our leadership within Manitoba's public education system.

The plan sets a clear and coordinated path for living MTS's mission and values while fostering a resilient, thriving organizational culture.

Click here to [read](#)

<https://www.mbteach.org/mtscms/index.php/2025/12/08/mts-releases-strategic-plan/>



## FemLightenment

SERIES | 2025/2026

The FemLightenment Series is designed to bring those who identify as women together to share their experiences in educational leadership.

MTS Leadership Learning Series

### Teaching in the Tension:

#### Finding Clarity and Calm When Everything Competes for Your Time

Virtual Session 3 – January 20, 2026 from 6:30-7:30 pm

In this session, Dr. Shahana brings a compassionate and practical lens to the realities of burnout in education. Together we explore why chronic overload happens, how competing responsibilities drain cognitive and emotional bandwidth, and what small but powerful interventions can restore a sense of control.

[Register for Teaching in the Tension: Finding Clarity and Calm When Everything Competes for Your Time](#)

**Fiesta  
BONSPIEL**  
FEB 6-8 2026

Friday, Feb 6th Appetizer Evening  
Saturday, Feb 7th Curling, Supper and DJ  
Sunday, Feb 8th PLAYOFFS!

Presented by  
WESTA (Western Teachers' Association)  
at the Morden Curling Club, Morden, MB  
\$200 per rink - 3 event bonspiel with 3 game guarantee  
Cash payouts, draw to the button competition,  
shooter specials, pitatas and more!

Entry deadline is January 23rd, 2026

For more information,  
email [dawnrigaux@hotmail.com](mailto:dawnrigaux@hotmail.com) or call 204-823-1178

## MTS Curling

The Manitoba Teachers' Society presents the MTS Bonspiel, Feb 6-8, 2026, hosted by Western Teachers' Association. Deadline for entry is January 23, 2026.

Contact SOTA if you'd like to enter a team

**INTERNATIONALLY  
EDUCATED  
TEACHERS  
WORKSHOP**

Are you a teacher who did not attend elementary or secondary school in Canada as a student?

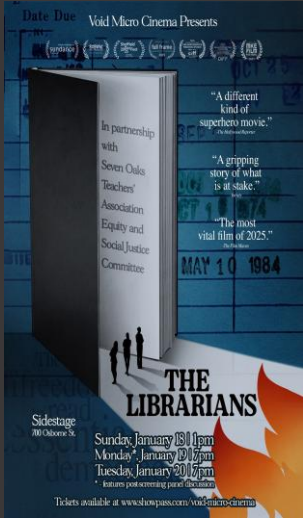
This session aims to support internationally educated teachers working in Manitoba public schools in their socio-professional integration. Access to funding is available for MTS members from equity-deserving groups to attend this event.

JANUARY 31, 2026  
9:00 A.M. - 3:30 P.M.

## Internationally Educated Teachers Workshop

This is a FREE workshop that aims to support internationally educated teachers on January 31, 2026.

[Register now!](#)  
<https://memberlink.mbteach.org/>



## Join the SOTA **TEACHER WELLNESS** group!

We provide wellness opportunities to teachers.

Join the conversation and have some fun!

Contact the Teacher Wellness group Chair Renata Gawlik to join or for more information:

sotateacherwellness@gmail.com  
204-985-6120

## JOIN THE **SOTA WAL** (WOMEN AND LEADERSHIP) GROUP

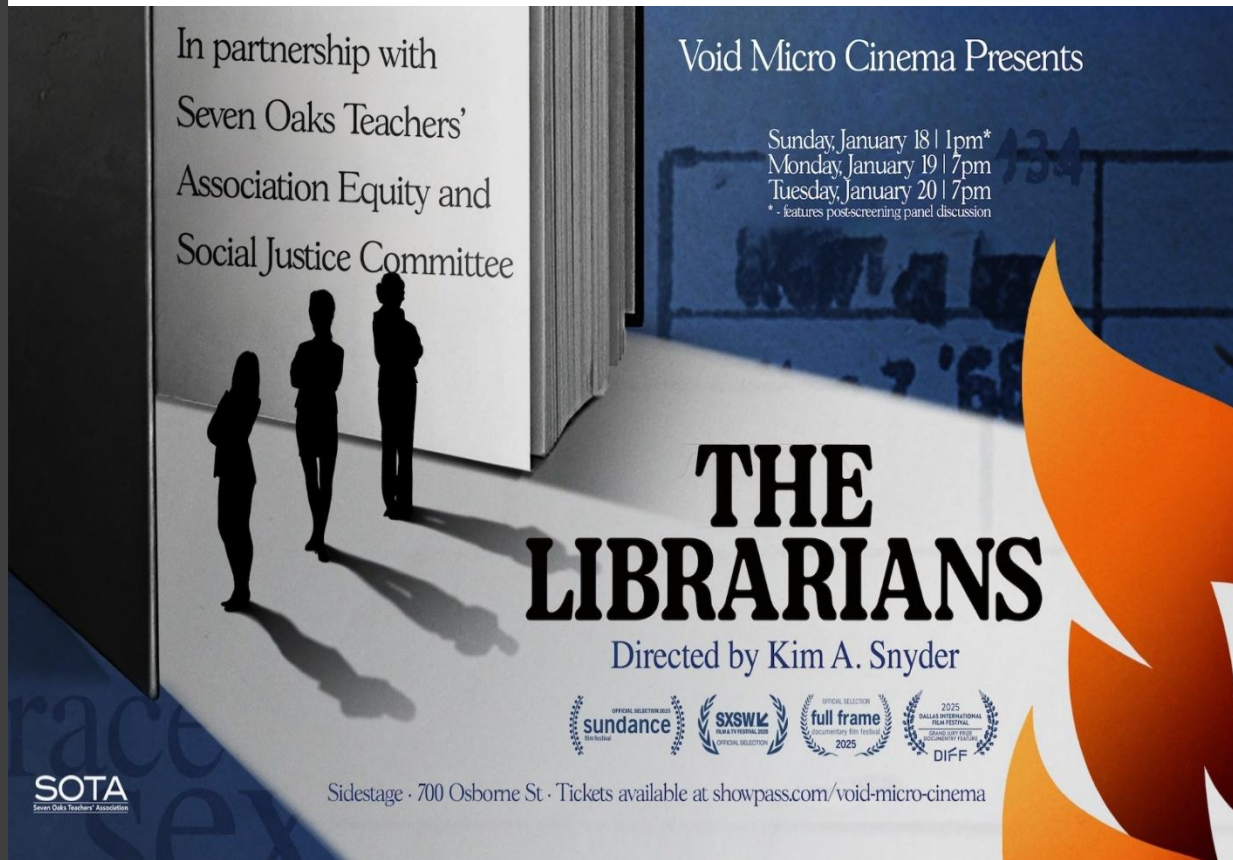
This is a group that brings teachers together to share stories, reflect, and support one another's growth as leaders.

**TO JOIN**

SOTA WAL CHAIR - LINA ARRUDA  
wal7oaks@gmail.com  
204-985-6120

Tickets for *The Librarians* are available for SOTA Members.

Email the SOTA Office your name and what day you would like to attend for your free ticket! (office@sota.mbteach.org)



# SEVEN OAKS TEACHERS' ASSOCIATION

PRESENTS

# JETS NIGHT!



VS



## Event Details

- **Date:** Sunday, January 11, 2026
- **Time:** 1:00 pm puck drop
- **Cost:** \$68 per ticket (tax & fees incl)
- **Payment:** Due to the SOTA office by January 5<sup>th</sup>, 2026

**SPACE IS LIMITED!**

**TO REGISTER:** Email SOTA at [vicepresident@sota.mbteach.org](mailto:vicepresident@sota.mbteach.org)

**Include your name, work site, and # of tickets.**

**Tickets are not reserved until payment is recieved.**



# Contest Corner: Winter Holiday Trivia

Send your name and the correct trivia answers by **January 9<sup>th</sup>, 2026**, to [vicepresident@sota.mbteach.org](mailto:vicepresident@sota.mbteach.org) to enter to win one of five SOTA prize bundles!



- 1. Who wrote the children's book *The Polar Express*?**  
A) Roald Dahl  
B) Chris Van Allsburg  
C) E.B. White  
D) Maurice Sendak
- 2. In *Home Alone*, where are the McCallisters traveling when they forget Kevin?**  
A) New York  
B) London  
C) Paris  
D) Rome
- 3. Which winter holiday tradition became popular in the U.S. after being promoted by Coca-Cola advertisements in the 1930s?**  
A) Hanging stockings  
B) Decorating evergreen trees  
C) The modern image of Santa Claus  
D) Exchanging wrapped gifts
- 4. In the movie *Frozen*, who sings the song "Let It Go"?**  
A) Olaf  
B) Anna  
C) Elsa  
D) Kristof
- 5. What is the name for the shortest day of the year in the Northern Hemisphere?**  
A) Equinox  
B) Winter Solstice  
C) Polar Night  
D) Frost Day
- 6. In *How the Grinch Stole Christmas*, what is the name of the town the Grinch lives near?**  
A) Snowville  
B) Frostburg  
C) Whoville  
D) Candy Cane Lane
- 7. Which country is credited with the tradition of putting lights on winter trees?**  
A) Sweden  
B) Germany  
C) England  
D) Norway
- 8. Which song is the most-streamed holiday song of all time?**  
A) "All I Want for Christmas Is You" - Mariah Carey  
B) "White Christmas" - Bing Crosby  
C) "Last Christmas" - Wham!  
D) "Jingle Bell Rock" - Bobby Helms
- 9. Which city hosts the world-famous New Year's Eve ball drop?**  
A) Las Vegas  
B) London  
C) New York City  
D) Sydney
- 10. Which winter holiday film sparked debate about whether it qualifies as a "holiday movie"?**  
A) Love Actually  
B) The Holiday  
C) Die Hard  
D) Elf

# 2025-2026 SOTA Dates



## January 2025

6<sup>th</sup> - SOTA Executive

20<sup>th</sup> - SOTA Council Meeting- Virtual

## February 2026

3<sup>rd</sup> - SOTA Executive

17<sup>th</sup> - SOTA Council Meeting- Virtual

## March 2026

3<sup>rd</sup> - SOTA Executive

24<sup>th</sup> - SOTA Council Meeting- Collège Garden City Collegiate Library

## April 2026

7<sup>th</sup> - SOTA Executive

21<sup>st</sup> - SOTA Council Meeting- Collège Garden City Collegiate Library

## May 2026

5<sup>th</sup> - SOTA Executive

12<sup>th</sup> - SOTA Council Meeting- Collège Garden City Collegiate Library

## June 2026

2<sup>nd</sup> - SOTA Executive

16<sup>th</sup> - SOTA Council Meeting- Collège Garden City Collegiate Library

## SOTA Council

Each school or workplace is allowed one councillor for each ten members and at least one alternate for every two councillors. One councillor shall be designated the Head Councillor.

Join us at Council, typically the third Tuesday of each month.

**Get involved  
with SOTA  
Council!**

## Contact Us

SOTA office  
204-985-6120

President  
Jeff Cieszecki  
president@sota.  
mbteach.org

Vice President  
Karen Vaarmeyer  
vicepresident@sota.  
mbteach.org

All matters will be dealt with in confidence.

Manitoba Teachers' Society  
general switchboard:  
204-888-7961

# MONTHLY MEETING

Be Connected. Be Heard. Be Informed.